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Special Preparedness activities in the Sahel Region

Standard Project Report 2018

World Food Programme in Senegal, Republic of (SN)

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Regional Context

The Sahel region (Burkina, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger) faces drought every three years and a major drought every five to ten years. During the most recent major drought event in 2012, over 18 million people faced hunger and one million children were at risk of dying of malnutrition. In line with this trend, in 2017, the agro-pastoral season in much of the Sahel was characterized by poor rainfall distribution in time and space, resulting in a decrease in agricultural production and a deficit of pasture. This signals an earlier (March-April) onset and extended 2018 lean season[1], which means food stock exhaustion earlier than usual before the next harvest[2].

Generally, all food security analyses alerted that the worst lean season in four years has come early in the Sahel and will see a sharp increase in the number of those needing urgent food and nutrition assistance. Following this, the November 2017 Cadre Harmonisé concluded that 4.2 million people[3] would require food assistance during this lean season, a record high since 2014. In some countries, the risk of an early and extended lean season is compounded by economic crisis, such as in Chad and Niger, and intensifying and expanding conflict in northern/central Mali, western and eastern Niger and northern Burkina Faso.

In preparation of the Sahel Shock Response (SSR) for 2018 lean season, one of the initiatives was to ensure that national Governments, WFP and partners are better prepared to respond to a big calamity, such as a large-scale drought similar to the one in 2012. Consequently, the project "Emergency Preparedness - Sahel IR PREP-201118" was launched in December 2017 (for 3 months) covering the G5 Sahel countries[4], through several joint CO/RB/HQ scoping missions mainly for the following specific activities:

1. Analysis of current WFP, partner & Government emergency preparedness and response capacity.
2. Evaluation of the readiness level of the above to respond to a bigger crisis and what potential challenges could be faced.
3. Support of the implementation/operationalization of the Sahel scale-up plans
4. Assessment of feasible opportunities and best practices to, ideally, move towards the humanitarian-development nexus. Within this, gain an understanding of how the response, under a market-based approach, would also have to be carried out by carefully considering the nutritional needs, food security and gender dynamics.

The main outcome of this project was to provide appropriate recommendations and an action plan ensuring the correct implementation of the SSR.

Activities and Operational Partnerships

Noting the concern expressed by WFP in the region, as well as donors, in regard to the levels of national and regional emergency preparedness, the Regional Bureau of Dakar, alongside Head Quarters and the Countries Offices, worked to establish a strategy for a Sahel Shock Response for the year of 2018 and going forward. Ultimately, the initiative sought to place the affected Governments of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Senegal and Niger, at the center of all planning. The Sahel response intended to strengthen the link between the food security and nutrition analysis, early warning systems and rapid response mechanisms in line with the national Government response plans, while recognizing the need for resilience and sustainable national adaptive social protection programmes.

In order to inform and implement the Sahel emergency response, the regional IR-PREP-201118 project was launched for preparedness activities including assessments, recruitment of consultants, and providing training for a duration of three months with the following activities put in place in Mali, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Niger, Chad and the Regional Bureau Dakar.

At Regional Bureau level, a Desk Review and Scenario Building exercises were conducted to better plan the SSR operations. The Desk Review pooled together relevant data on the national early warning, preparedness, market intelligence and response capacities (including review of Cadre Harmonisé results[5]), by reviewing various studies and lessons learned, by leveraging WFP's knowledge[6] and expertise[7], as well as through external analyses.

Field missions were then carried out in the six countries. Joint teams from the Dakar Regional Bureau and Head Quarters, composed of Vulnerability and Analysis Mapping, Emergency Preparedness and Response, Programme[8], Supply Chain and Nutrition experts[9], deployed on missions to the relevant countries. Team composite on was fine-tuned/adapted also based on CO needs, so it was not always the same functional areas on

the teams.

The aim of the field missions were to assess the broader national response plans for 2018, and WFP's response within that plan- regardless of the type of calamity (drought, displacement, etc). The teams, amongst other tasks and depending on CO needs aimed to:

- Review and assess the latest food security results[10];
- Obtain an overview of the various national response mechanisms in place, their weaknesses and strengths;
- Provide support within the design of the current WFP scale-up plan and recommendations for implementation;
- Identify gaps within the current national, WFP and partner response;
- Assess critical early warning triggers and, where possible, identify opportunities render national support systems more shock-responsive.

Burkina Faso

Activities carried out included the :

- Implementation of an emergency food security assessment to assess the impact of the climate shock and compounding factors (insecurity, market prices). This had informed evidence-based response planning.
- Procurement of one armored vehicle to allow for staff continued safe movement in the security affected northern region. This was in line with the recommendations of the Emergency Preparedness and Response and the Security Mission.

Chad

WFP trained frontline WFP, partner and government responders on emergency response, with specific attention to observed challenges. During April and May, WFP organized trainings for its staff in the field and for cooperating partners on targeting, nutrition, monitoring & evaluation, the use of different transfer modalities, compliance to donor requirements and Global Positioning System (GPS) coordinate collection (through practical sessions). This built a common understanding on procedures and harmonized practices across the country. Using a cascade approach, those that participated in these sessions relayed the acquired knowledge to their colleagues.

WFP Chad organised three trainings of trainers for 15 cooperating partners (one in Abeche for the Wadi Fira region, one in Moussoro for the Bahr el Gazel, Kanem and Lake regions and one in Ati for the Batha and Guéra regions); all attending cooperating partners then carried out trainings for their field teams. In addition, sessions on logistic were organised by each sub-office, to inform partners on processes.

WFP Chad also worked in close collaboration with cooperating partners to organise joint meetings with local authorities to launch the lean season activities and share progress on interventions. WFP Chad also supported cooperating partners during targeting, distribution and monitoring activities.

In 2018, WFP engaged dedicated emergency expertise to support coordination with national authorities and cooperating partners in the scale-up of the response and its integration in government-owned national response. The emergency coordinator regularly liaised with different stakeholders and established concertation mechanisms and regular external reporting products.

To support emergency preparedness, WFP carried out an Emergency Food Security and Nutritional Assessment (EFSA) of areas of the Sahel impacted by the previous year's rainfall anomalies. Data collection, compilation and analysis took place in May and results were released in June. This provided further insights on the rapid deterioration of the food security and nutritional situation in the Sahelian belt and added to the findings of the March 2018 Cadre Harmonisé.

To raise awareness on the severity of the 2018 lean season and the critical need to provide an adequate response, WFP enhanced its advocacy and visibility actions. In March, WFP, FAO and UNICEF developed early action and scale-up plan to address the needs of the most vulnerable people in five Sahelian countries. In June, WFP allocated broader corporate capacities and resources to help stabilize the food security and nutritional levels and protect earlier investment in resilience. Furthermore, the SahelNOW campaign brought the larger audience closer to the realities of vulnerable people. In collaboration with the French Institute and HAPE Collective, WFP Chad organized a food and music event in N'Djamena on 1 June.

Mauritania

The project was designed to ensure WFP's preparedness capacities by reinforcing the level of expertise, as well as mapping and tracking the food security situation in the country. This was done through the implementation of the following activities:

- Capacity Development Activities, designed to carry out a more in-depth analysis of the food security situation in the country at departmental level, through the Food Security Monitoring Systems (FSMS).

- Direct Support Cost Activities, designed to reinforce partners- and government-led food security, and inter-sector coordinator mechanisms (designation of a food sector group coordinator); as well as ensure the regular presence of emergency preparedness and response coordinators (alternation of four emergency coordinators).

An Integrated Food Security and Response Plan (from now on 2018 Response Plan) was elaborated to encompass all humanitarian interventions addressing food insecurity and malnutrition. The humanitarian response was built on capacities already in place between partners, and with the government. The Government plan foresaw a set of interventions such as an increase of subsidized food sale through “Emel” shops, subsidized sale of livestock feeds and other livestock support, construction of livestock wells, nutrition activities and unconditional food and cash distributions through the Commissariat à la sécurité Alimentaire, and the national social protection programme.

Mali

Activities carried out in Mali included:

- the training of WFP, government and partner staff in Bamako, Gao and Mopti on minimum emergency preparedness, rapid assessment tools, and coordination and implementation of emergency response. As part of the exercise, an action plan will be developed per region.
- the temporarily engagement of dedicated emergency expertise to finalize WFP's rapid shock response strategy and its integration with the Rapid Response Mechanism operated by partners in the northern Mali (funded by ECHO and OFDA). The coordinator will also support the aforementioned emergency preparedness training actions in the North.
- the investment in WFP's rapid response readiness (in the North specifically, and more widely) by conducting a sectoral assessment for cash-based transfers and through training WFP, government and partner staff on CBT preparation and implementation in emergencies.
- the creation a diverse database of primary informants to rapidly track and map crisis developments to guide contextual analysis and rapid response in difficult to access areas of Gao, Kidal, Mopti, Segou, and Timbuktu. Using a call centre and WFP's mVAM technology, informants will be able to call for free to alert on developments. Third party monitoring presents an opportunity to follow-up on alerts.

Niger

- In Niger, the project was used to undertake a joint regional crop and livestock market assessment, a joint rapid assessment of food insecurity which focused on pastoral communities and to install an alert system to continue observing the assessed communities via mobile telecommunication.

The joint regional assessment to carry out a crop and livestock market and food insecurity assessment in Niger took place in February 2018. It was carried out with the Agricultural Market Observatory (SIMA[11]) and the Cattle Market Observatory (SIMB[12]) of the regional permanent committee to fight drought in the Sahel (CILSS[13]), the international famine early warning system network (FEWSNet) and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Its aim was to assess how the identified fodder deficit affects national markets and to do projections on market developments and levels of food security throughout the annual lean season. To this end, participants of 28 agricultural markets and local authorities in all of Niger's eight regions were interviewed.

The joint rapid assessment of livestock and livelihoods of households in pastoral and agro-pastoral areas in Niger was also carried out in February 2018. Under the leadership of the government's coordination unit of the national early warning system[14], WFP cooperated with the Nigerien Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation and national livestock associations to undertake assessments of 2,505 households in 69 municipalities, focusing on areas of pastoral activities. The assessment aimed to estimate the number of food insecure pastoralists resulting from the identified fodder deficit.

The pastoral alert system intended to get a better understanding of semi-nomadic livestock farmers' seasonal movements through an analysis of mobile phone data, to detect abnormal seasonal migrations linked to a poor pastoral season. The system could help better target pastoralist communities in drought years and prevent communal tensions between pastoralist and agricultural communities in the southern parts of the country. The analysis would have been carried out by an external service provider with experience in analysing mobile phone data in crises such as West Africa's Ebola epidemic in 2013-2016, on the basis of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with WFP, a mobile phone operator (MPO) and the Government of Niger. However, due to delays in the signature of the MoU and the setup of a specialized Government Agency for the protection of personal data, an alternative pastoral alert system will be put in place. Through the national livestock market information system (SIM-B), WFP is planning to collect data from key informants in livestock markets through smartphones. Smartphones have been handed over to the national disaster management authority (DNP-GCA) to be distributed to key informants at strategically placed livestock markets along transhumance routes. This will allow for regular checks for the arrival of herds and price levels of livestock ahead of the lean season, feeding into the market observatories 'regular bulletins.

- [1] Lean season period in the Sahel seasonal calendar is from June to August*
- [2] Harvest period in the Sahel seasonal calendar is from September/October*
- [3] This result has been confirmed by the March 2018' Cadre Harmonisé Analysis showing 5 million people projected to be food insecure during the lean season 2018*
- [4] G5 Sahel : Burkina, Chad, Mali, Mauritanie, Niger*
- [5] The Cadre Harmonise results will provide additional information on the affected population.*
- [6] This included the historical memory of staff involved in the previous drought or with knowledge on the region.*
- [7] Note the report on Global Report on Food Crises.*
- [8] Experts on Cash-Based Transfers were deployed within Programme and based on CO needs.*
- [9] Team composition was established in an ad hoc manner, depending on the profiles required for each mission, as well as staff availability. Other functional areas may or may not be required.*
- [10] Historical trends related to the past impact of drought.*
- [11] "Système d'information sur les marchés agricoles"*
- [12] "Système d'information sur les marchés du bétail"*
- [13] "Comite permanent international de lutte contre la sécheresse dans le Sahel"*
- [14] "Cellule de Coordination du Système d'Alerte Précoce"*

Results

A joint internal WFP scoping missions were conducted by Regional Bureau of Dakar, Head Quarters and the Country Offices. The main output the missions were a report and a risk matrix. The report was disseminated in English and translated into French. On the missions and direction of the Sahel emergency response, it is important to note a few things that arose from the field missions:

- Each WFP Country Office found itself at a different 'stage' of preparation, response, planning, and had different needs. As such, the reports and outcomes of the missions varied slightly based on outcomes established with the Country Office management, and team composition.
- Some missions were more 'support' missions, while others were perhaps more of an 'oversight' mission. In other words, where a Country Office was in its initial phases of response planning, the mission provided more technical support. Where a Country Office already had a response in place, the mission was less of a surge mission.
- Although the missions also sought to look at the Country Office and Government preparedness with a more long-term lense, looking at the capacity and strategy of WFP, partners and Governments, in the event of a large-scale drought, that was not possible in all of the missions. This is mostly due to the fact that there was a greater need to support the short-term planning/the 2018 response, that the sense of the Sahel emergency was slightly redirected and re-prioritized to support the 2018 lean season response, thus leaving the long-term scenario impact in second place. In other words, the need for support on the preparation for 2018 was urgent and did not allow for looking beyond that- due to time and staff limitations.

The field missions helped inform recommendations and immediate actions that could be implemented by the relevant country office for the Sahel emergency response.

The 'forward looking' goal of the missions was to understand the level of preparedness of WFP Country Offices vis a vis a potential big drought. This was supposed to be achieved by outlining: (1) what type of food security analysis, early warning and rapid response mechanisms Governments have in place, (2) if Governments have an early warning system or rapid response mechanism (e.g. RRM), and (3) what areas remain a challenge/need to be

strengthened/what WFP can do to support that, thus allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the vulnerability and response levels of the countries. This was possible, to some extent, in some of the missions (namely Chad mission, refer to the Chad report, as it also included a Resilience expert in the team composition), but not in all and to the same extent.

Following the scoping missions, a series of recommendations and an action plan were put in place for the 2018 lean season, namely:

1. Scaling-up response plans to augment the WFP caseload vs. what Country Offices had originally planned;
2. Augmenting staffing, repositioning, resources & advance financing to consider the increase in caseload;
3. Enhanced partnerships; working with Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) on joint-position papers and response planning for the 2018 lean season;
4. Increased advocacy with partners, alongside Governments, at high-level events, at the Executive Board and other high level meetings.

Burkina Faso

In Burkina Faso, through this Emergency Preparedness project, WFP implemented an emergency food security assessment (EFSA) to assess the impact of the climate shock and compounding factors (insecurity, market prices) and inform evidence-based response planning. The EFSA results provided clear pictures of the food security situation. The Government in Burkina Faso was extremely prepared and aware of the situation, with willingness to respond but does not have sufficient financial resources to do so. Following the EFSA results, donors shown more commitments on the joint Government and partner response plan.

WFP also procured of one armored vehicle to allow for safe movement of staff in the security affected northern region. In addition, as preparedness measures and to reduce the readiness gap identified during the scoping missions, several IT and Logistic equipment have been procured, to ensure that staff will be in correct conditions for a proper and timely implementation of the emergency operations in all WFP sub-offices and warehouses.

Chad

The IR PREP 201118 augmented WFP Chad's readiness to track and respond to the most severe lean season in six years.

Capacity-building activities enabled cooperating partners to draft and implement projects that paid specific attention to gender and protection mainstreaming, with the aim of preserving the rights of both beneficiaries and staff. For instance, WFP and its partners installed some shelters at distribution sites to provide shade to beneficiaries.

Field-level agreements were also flexible enough to include changes in the number of targeted beneficiaries. This format enabled WFP to align its figures to the results of assessments when these were released (the Cadre Harmonisé in March and the EFSA in June) and provided the required elasticity for an enhanced response, as additional funding was confirmed.

Before and throughout the lean season, WFP held regular meetings with partners, both in N'Djamena and in the field, to discuss preparedness activities, targeting criteria, best practices, action plans, prevention of malnutrition activities and awareness. Close coordination ensured efficiency and allowed WFP Chad to collect best practices and lessons learned that will inform future responses.

Results of the EFSA showed that as the peak of the lean season approached, more people were falling into Crisis (Phase 3) and Emergency (Phase 4) food insecurity compared to March 2018 levels defined by the Cadre Harmonisé: close to 1 million people had little or no access to food in the Sahelian belt. The nutritional situation was of great concern, with higher Global Acute malnutrition (GAM) rates, as measured by Mid-Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC), compared to 2017 in all regions except for Guéra. GAM prevalences in Barh el Gazel and Kanem exceeded maximum levels observed during the 2010-2017 lean season.

Lastly, WFP Chad was the only country office that carried out an in-country advocacy event, bringing together a large number of Government representatives, cooperating partners, media and donors. This was followed by continuous coverage of the lean season response operation, through external communications.

Mauritania

The project allowed WFP in Mauritania to ensure an adequate preparedness level, to appropriately respond to the food crisis. WFP undertook a significant scale-up of its lean season interventions and acted as the main driver of coordinated early warning, response planning, fundraising and delivery efforts in the country.

WFP and the food security sector-wide preparedness capacity was driven by several food security assessments (The Food Security Monitoring System (FSMS) and the Cadre Harmonisé), which allowed the sectors to identify and map the most urgent humanitarian needs. The FSMS data collection at a department level (instead of a regional

level, as done previously) provided an in-depth analysis of the food security situation of vulnerable households. The FSMS results fed directly into the Cadre Harmonisé of March 2018, which facilitated the finalization of the integrated response plan, and geographical targeting of the food security and nutrition sector partners in the departments with the highest prevalence of food insecurity and high burden of malnutrition.

A pre-investment in the preparedness of the activities for the response plan allowed WFP to develop a positive and meaningful scale-up and contingency response plan over the 2018 lean season period. WFP was able to reach more than 340,000 food insecure people in 27 departments between April and September 2018, through unconditional food and cash transfers, integrated with preventive supplementary nutrition rations, and complemented by moderate acute malnutrition treatments. This was facilitated by the expertise of the Emergency Coordinators who supported WFP in implementing an adequate response, as well as taking prompt necessary corrective actions during the months of the implementation of lifesaving activities.

The sectors-wide coordination was ensured by an *ad hoc* food security coordinator. WFP positioned itself as a co-lead of the Food Security sector, playing a crucial role in ensuring a continuous follow-up of the humanitarian response, a dynamic analysis of needs, and a better coordination among partners. Coordination meetings were held regularly to ensure continuous follow-up of interventions at department and regional levels, to address the priority humanitarian and operational needs in a prompt manner. Coordination between partners ensured timely, coherent, effective food security analysis and response. It also supported establishing and maintaining appropriate information management.

Finally, the pre-investment in preparedness activities allowed WFP to sign Field-Level Agreements with implementing partners as early as March/April 2018, and enter into agreement with a financial service provider, for a more rapid and efficient provision of cash-based transfers throughout the response.

Niger

The joint regional crop and livestock market assessment found that in February 2018 most agricultural markets had a satisfactory level of basic crops. This was explained by a resumption of imports of millet, sorghum and maize from Nigeria, which had been interrupted in 2017 due to a sharp devaluation of the Nigerian currency, as well as by continued imports of millet and sorghum from Benin, Burkina Faso and Ghana. Demand has remained low since December 2017 though and no price increases have been observed since then. Nonetheless, prices remain above the 5-year average and above the level of the same month in the previous year. Thus, accessibility of poor households to basic crops remains reduced compared to previous years. The Livestock supply was found to be average on nearly all markets, with a limited supply of large ruminants. Exports of ruminants to Nigeria has been noticed to pick up again. Despite the resumption of this important trade for Nigerien livestock producers, prices for large ruminants remained low, compared to the 5-year average. The assessment recommended an investigation on the restrictive measures and logistical issues regarding crop imports from Burkina Faso as well as the launching sales of the national cereal stock at reduced prices to guarantee access to basic crops by the poorest share of the population.

The joint rapid assessment of livestock and livelihoods of households in pastoral and agro-pastoral areas found a fodder deficit of 10 million tons, which represents 41 percent of the needs of the national livestock. It was observed that transhumance of herds had started earlier than usual and had taken unprecedented routes with more livestock than usual being routed towards South-Western and South-Central parts of the country. The early commencement of transhumance may be linked to the early drying out of surface water observed in nomadic areas. As a result, nomadic schools closed earlier than usual. According to the assessment, all these observations may trigger conflicts between pastoralists and crop farmers, as the influx of cattle in crop farming areas ahead of the harvest season may result in harvest loss. Meanwhile, the evolution of the terms of trade between cattle farmers and crop farmers was damaging for cattle farmers (with a 100 kg bag of millet trading for 2-3 goats). The assessment recommended to identify critical crop and livestock markets and to continuously observe their functioning. The beginning of crop sales at reduced prices by the government in March and April was also suggested to alleviate pressures on limited resources.

Regarding the pastoral alert system, it was decided to provide financial support to public market observatories of the Ministry of Agriculture, in line with a Memorandum of Understanding. Livestock and crop markets were monitored weekly, drawing on information provided by a set of key informants on markets throughout the country.

WFP provided technical support to the Ministry of Solidarity and Humanitarian Action to develop the social protection policy, the planning and implementation of the response to conflict-related displacement, and for the design of a simple unified register that will be used to register beneficiaries of safety net programmes.

Figures and Indicators

Data Notes

- Cover page photo © WFP/ Maria Gallar
- WFP provided life-saving food and nutritional assistance during the lean season in five countries in the Sahel. Province of Wadi Fira, Chad.